

ACTION BRIEF

DESTINATION REPUTATION:

VIOLENT CRIME AND SAFETY CONCERNS

INTRODUCTION

Gun Violence, Crime and Safety Concerns

Safety is a top concern for meeting planners, visitors and residents. While crime statistics provide one perspective, perception and proactive safety measures significantly influence traveler confidence. Destination organizations must ensure transparent, solution-driven communication and alignment with key stakeholders to maintain trust in the destination.

This brief provides structured strategies to address gun violence, crime and safety concerns for three key audiences: hospitality partners, elected officials and local business leaders, law enforcement and residents. By implementing proactive safety initiatives, coordinated messaging and stakeholder collaboration, destinations can reinforce security, build community trust and sustain a strong visitor economy.

This research was made possible through the support of the Destinations International Foundation, whose mission is to drive innovation and provide critical resources that strengthen the future of destination organizations. The foundation champions forward-thinking initiatives that enable destination leaders to navigate change with insight, strategy and resilience. We acknowledge their commitment to industry research and extend sincere thanks to all foundation supporters who make initiatives like this possible.



SCENARIOS

The following scenarios illustrate real-world situations that destination organizations may encounter when addressing this issue. They are intended to provide context and practical insight into the key findings outlined in this brief.

1 SCENARIO

Violence Near Event(s) Raises Safety and Inclusivity Concerns

A high-profile incident, such as a shooting near a major festival or targeted violence against a specific community during a cultural event generates widespread media coverage just before a large convention. The timing and nature of the incident raise concerns not only about physical safety but also about whether the destination feels inclusive and secure for all attendees. Meeting planners and affinity groups seek assurances, asking for updated protocols and visible commitments to safety and belonging.

2 SCENARIO

Global Media Narratives Shape Safety Perceptions

A mass shooting at a non-tourist location or aggregated international media coverage of U.S. gun violence cites the destination as a point of concern. Even when the incident is unrelated to tourism or based on outdated data, the destination becomes linked with broader narratives around public safety. International visitors and planners begin to hesitate, questioning whether the destination aligns with attendee expectations for security and stability.

3 SCENARIO

Rising Crime Rates Impact Visitor Perception

Year-over-year statistics show an increase in certain types of crime, such as car break-ins or assaults, in areas adjacent to the city's entertainment or convention district. Local media stories begin to focus heavily on "downtown safety," creating a perception issue among potential visitors and planners, even if incidents are isolated or not tourist related.



1. HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, ATTRACTIONS AND AIRPORTS

Proactive Safety Measures and Visitor Reassurance

- ◆ Communicate visible safety measures, such as surveillance, security personnel and emergency response planning, to reassure visitors.
- ◆ Ensure frontline staff are trained to address guest safety inquiries confidently and transparently.
- ◆ Encourage travelers to engage with safety resources and be aware of reporting procedures for concerns.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are hospitality staff trained to answer visitors' safety concerns accurately and reassuringly?*
- ◆ *How are we ensuring guests see and understand the security measures in place?*
- ◆ *Do we have a unified messaging strategy for hospitality businesses to align with regarding crime and safety?*

Crisis Preparedness and Business Continuity

- ◆ Develop emergency response toolkits for hotels, attractions and airports to ensure preparedness.
- ◆ Create standardized safety materials, including emergency contacts, shelter locations and law enforcement coordination strategies.
- ◆ Conduct regular safety briefings with hospitality partners to review crime trends and crisis response protocols.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are hospitality businesses equipped with a standardized safety toolkit?*
- ◆ *How are we communicating emergency protocols with hospitality partners?*
- ◆ *Are we engaging law enforcement in hospitality training and preparedness exercises?*

Security Collaboration and Public-Private Partnerships

- ◆ Establish direct partnerships between hotels, attractions and law enforcement to enhance real-time security coordination.
- ◆ Encourage participation in Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs) to share intelligence and mitigation strategies.
- ◆ Promote joint safety campaigns between local businesses and law enforcement to reinforce community vigilance.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How do we facilitate stronger collaboration between hospitality businesses and law enforcement agencies?*
- ◆ *Are we integrating real-time safety updates into destination-wide visitor communication strategies?*
- ◆ *What additional resources can we provide to ensure hospitality businesses are active participants in public safety efforts?*

2. ELECTED OFFICIALS AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Public Safety Communication and Policy Implementation

- ◆ Maintain transparency in crime-related public messaging while emphasizing proactive safety enhancements.
- ◆ Provide elected officials with unified talking points to address safety concerns confidently and factually.
- ◆ Reinforce the link between economic growth and public safety investments to encourage ongoing funding.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How do we align messaging between elected officials, law enforcement and the tourism sector?*
- ◆ *Are government leaders effectively communicating safety investments to maintain traveler confidence?*
- ◆ *What proactive steps are we taking to highlight improvements in safety-related infrastructure and policy?*

Community Trust and Law Enforcement Engagement

- ◆ Advocate for law enforcement policies that prioritize visitor and resident safety while promoting transparency.
- ◆ Support community policing initiatives that foster stronger relationships between officers, businesses and residents.
- ◆ Encourage elected officials to engage in public safety forums to keep stakeholders informed and involved in crime prevention efforts.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How can we foster collaboration between elected officials, law enforcement and tourism stakeholders?*
- ◆ *Are we supporting community policing strategies that positively impact visitor safety perceptions?*
- ◆ *What data-driven insights can we share to reinforce the effectiveness of crime prevention programs?*

Crisis Management and Reputation Protection

- ◆ Develop coordinated crisis response plans that ensure swift, unified messaging in the event of major safety incidents.
- ◆ Establish rapid-response media strategies to prevent misinformation and maintain public confidence.
- ◆ Equip government officials with media training to handle inquiries about safety concerns effectively.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we prepared by having a crisis response plan that aligns with government and law enforcement agencies?*
- ◆ *How do we ensure public officials have the resources to communicate effectively about crime and safety initiatives?*
- ◆ *What proactive measures are in place to counter negative media coverage related to safety incidents?*

3. LOCAL BUSINESS LEADERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND RESIDENTS

Community-Driven Safety Solutions

- ◆ Encourage local business leaders to participate in crime prevention programs, including Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs).
- ◆ Collaborate with law enforcement on joint safety initiatives, such as increased patrols in high-traffic tourism areas.
- ◆ Promote local engagement in safety programs, including neighborhood watch initiatives and public safety workshops.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How are we engaging business leaders in crime prevention and safety initiatives?*
- ◆ *What opportunities exist for local businesses to partner with law enforcement on security efforts?*
- ◆ *How do we ensure that public safety concerns are addressed without discouraging visitors?*

Data Transparency and Safety Perception Management

- ◆ Share crime data in a clear, digestible format to educate stakeholders and prevent misinformation.
- ◆ Use perception research to address discrepancies between actual crime rates and public sentiment.
- ◆ Leverage local voices and community leaders to share success stories and highlight safety improvements.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How can we ensure that crime data is presented in a way that reassures rather than alarms visitors?*
- ◆ *What role can local businesses play in reinforcing accurate safety perceptions?*
- ◆ *Are we engaging community leaders in positive storytelling that highlights the destination's safety efforts?*

Public Awareness and Education Campaigns

- ◆ Launch visitor safety awareness programs that provide guidance on staying safe while exploring the destination.
- ◆ Promote public safety forums that offer residents and business owners opportunities to engage with law enforcement.
- ◆ Develop digital content and social media campaigns focused on safety, security enhancements, and community-driven solutions.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How can we encourage more businesses and residents to participate in public safety initiatives?*
- ◆ *What strategies can we implement to educate visitors on personal safety without discouraging travel?*
- ◆ *Are we maximizing digital platforms to showcase ongoing improvements in public safety measures?*

NEXT STEPS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Next Steps

- ◆ Develop a safety communication items for hospitality partners, government officials and business leaders.
- ◆ Strengthen partnerships with law enforcement to enhance public-private safety collaboration.
- ◆ Implement visitor education campaigns on safety best practices and crime prevention strategies.
- ◆ Conduct crisis response simulations with key stakeholders to improve coordination and messaging.
- ◆ Launch a digital initiative highlighting success stories related to crime reduction and safety enhancements.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ◆ Increase in visitor sentiment scores related to safety and public perception.
- ◆ Growth in stakeholder participation in safety initiatives and training programs.
- ◆ Reduction in negative media coverage and misinformation related to crime and safety concerns.
- ◆ Higher engagement rates in public awareness campaigns focused on safety initiatives.
- ◆ Improved coordination and communication between destination organizations, law enforcement and hospitality partners.

Addressing crime and safety concerns requires a multi-stakeholder, proactive approach that balances transparency, reassurance and action. By aligning messaging across hospitality, government and local businesses, destinations can reinforce confidence while actively contributing to long-term public safety solutions.

To understand more about this issue affecting your destination's reputation, learn more at:

<https://destinationsinternational.org/destination-reputation>



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About Destinations International

Destinations International is the world's largest and most respected resource for destination organizations, convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) and tourism boards. With more than 8,000 members and partners from over 750 destinations, the association represents a powerful forward-thinking and collaborative community around the world. For more information, visit destinationsinternational.org.

Future Partners

About Future Partners

Future Partners was founded by Dave Bratton and Erin Francis-Cummings in San Francisco, California, in 2003. It is a team of market researchers that work with over 250 organizations and travel brands around the U.S. and the world to provide insights and strategies that capture hearts, minds and market share. Future Partners connects human behavior and understanding to bring the future of travel within reach. For more information, visit futurepartners.com.



About the Destinations International Foundation

The Destinations International Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering destination organizations globally by providing education, research, advocacy and leadership development. The Foundation is classified as a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code and all donations are tax-deductible. For more information, visit destinationsinternational.org/about-foundation.



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